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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

October Term, 1955
No. 548

On Appeal from the Recorder's Court of the City of Detroit.

ALFRED E. BUTLER,

Appellant,

v.

STATE OF MICHIGAN,

Appellee.

MOTION TO DISMISS APPEAL

The State of Michigan, appellee, respectfully moves that the appeal of Alfred E. Butler, appellant, be dismissed on the ground that no substantial federal question is presented for review under 28 U.S.C. § 1257 (2).

I

Statute Involved

There is drawn in question, on the ground of repugnancy to the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States, the validity of a section of a Michigan statute which was first enacted in 1846, [1] continued

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[1] Rev. Stat. Mich. 1846, Vol. II, p. 682, Chap. 158, § 13.

in successive compilations for more than 80 years, [2] embodied in the penal code of 1931 and amended in 1953. [3] Only on 3 occasions has the Michigan Supreme Court construed or applied the act. [4]

Section 343 of Michigan's penal code, as amended, so far as here applicable and as it stood when appellant sold the book in question (June 16, 1954), provides:

> "Sec. 343. Any person who shall . . . sell . . . any book . . . containing obscene, immoral, lewd or lascivious language, or obscene, immoral, lewd or lascivious . . . descriptions, [tending to incite minors to violent or depraved or immoral acts,] manifestly tending to the corruption of the morals of youth, . . . shall be guilty of a misdemeanor." [5]

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[2]

Comp. Laws Mich., 1857, § 5868, 1871, § 7703, Howell's Stat., § 9289, Comp. Laws 1897, § 11700, 1915, § 15474, and 1929, § 16829.

[3]

Penal Code, Pub. Acts 1931, No. 328, § 343, as amended by Pub. Acts 1953, No. 74, effective Oct. 2 [Comp. Laws Supp. 1948, § 750.343 (Mich. Stat. Ann.—Henderson—1954 Rev. § 28.575)].

[4]

People v. Girardin, 1 Mich. 90; People v. Ketchum, 103 Mich. 443; and People v. Lathers, 223 Mich. 92.

[5]

The bracketed phrase ["tending to incite minors to violent or depraved or immoral acts,"] was added by amendment, Pub. Acts Mich. 1953, No. 74, effective October 2.—A misdemeanor is punishable by maximum imprisonment for 90 days or a fine of $100 or both. Penal Code, § 504 [Comp. Laws 1948 Supp., § 750.504 (Stat. Ann. 1954 Rev. § 28.772)].

II

Counter-Statement of the Case

We readily concede, as we must, that the questions sought to be reviewed were raised in the court below (R. 3), that they were duly presented to the State's highest court in an application for leave to appeal (R. 349), that such application was denied (R. 367) without opinion, that the recorder's court of the city of Detroit thereupon became the court of last resort from which appeal could be taken, that appellant's notice of appeal was timely filed, and that his jurisdictional statement was transmitted to this Court and the case docketed within the prescribed time. We therefore have no technical objections to the procedure which brought the cause to this Court. The sole ground urged for dismissal is that the federal question here presented, possesses no substance. There are, however, a few facts and circumstances to be noted in addition to those set forth in appellant's jurisdictional statement.

The criminal warrant (R. 1) issued upon complaint of Herbert W. Case, an inspector on the Detroit police department (R. 25), charged that on the 16th day of June, 1954, at the city of Detroit, Michigan, the appellant

> "did then and there unlawfully sell, possess with intent to sell or offer for sale, a certain books (sic) or other thing, to wit: a pocket-sized edition book entitled "The Devil Rides Outside", by John H. Griffin, author, (a Cardinal Giant GC-14), Pocket Books, Incorporated, N.Y. Publishers, containing obscene, immoral, lewd or lascivious language, or descriptions, tending to incite minors to violent or immoral acts, manifestly tending to the corruption of the morals of youth, and which aforementioned book, the said Alfred E. Butler did un-

lawfully sell, or offer for sale or possess with intent to sell, Contrary to the form of the statute, etc."

When the case was called for trial in open court on the 7th day of July, 1954, the accused, through his counsel, waived a jury and the matter proceeded. [6]

The arresting officer testified (R. 25) that while in charge of what is known as the "censorship bureau" of the Detroit police department in 1954, a book entitled "The Devil Rides Outside," written by John H. Griffin and published by Pocket Books, Inc., had been brought to his attention by the Ludington News Company, local distributor of "Pocket Books" in Detroit. The court, however, cut off this line of inquiry by sustaining an objection of defense counsel to a question whether this book had been submitted to the witness for approval before it was placed on sale, on the ground that the offense charged was the sale of the book. And the judge likewise sustained a similar objection to further questions which might draw out the fact that when the book came to his attention the officer consulted with the prosecuting attorney and placed the book upon the prohibited list. [7]

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[6]

Under Michigan law the constitutional right to trial by jury in a misdemeanor case tried by a justice of the peace, may be waived. Code of Criminal Procedure, Chap. 3, § 3 [Comp. Laws 1948, § 763.3 (Mich. Stat. Ann. 1954 Rev. § 28.856)]. People v. Henderson, 246 Mich. 481.

[7]

It would be noted at once that Michigan has no censorship law placing prior restraints upon the publication or sale of books. Law and Contemporary Problems, Vol. XX, p. 648, "The Doctrine of Prior Restraint," by Thomas I. Emerson, Yale University.—The "censorship bureau" to which Inspector Case refers, is con-

The book was sold by appellant to this police officer on the 16th day of June, 1954 (R. 27) at the Quality Photo Shop on Fourth avenue, Detroit for the sum of 50 cents and 2 cents sales tax, and during the trial (R. 28) it was identified and offered and received in evidence as Exhibit 1. Transmitted to the Michigan Supreme Court as a part of appellant's application for leave to appeal, it was deposited in the office of the clerk for consideration of the justices. A true copy of this exhibit has been certified as Vol. III of the record on file in this cause.

The arresting officer also testified (R. 32) he had compiled [and mimeographed] 101 excerpts from the book which were offered and received in evidence as Exhibit 2 over counsel's objection based on the doctrine that the book must be viewed as a whole and that any other view, permitting it to be judged by excerpts, would violate the prevailing rule in obscenity cases. [8] This exhibit was transmitted to the Michigan Supreme Court with the application for leave to appeal and was duly considered together with the book itself (Exhibit 1). A certified copy of Exhibit 2 [the excerpts] constitutes part of the Michigan

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ducted by the Detroit police department under a wholly voluntary arrangement with book distributors in cooperation with the prosecuting attorney upon whose advisory opinions all rely in their determination to protect youth from the evil effects of obscene literature. Please see law review article, "Literature, the Law of Obscenity, and the Constitution," Minnesota Law Review, Vol. 38, p. 295 at p. 314, for a description of the Detroit plan.

[8]

This brings into focus the conflict between the Hicklin rule of Lord Cockburn, Regina v. Hicklin, L.R., 3 Q.B. 360 and the rule first applied in U.S. v. One Book, Ulysses, 72 F. 2d 709.

Supreme Court record in this cause (R., Vol. II, pp. 368-395). We publish it as Appendix "A," *post*, pp. 1a - 53a.[9]

It is also important to note that defense counsel stated (R. 14-15) that if the court's ruling on his motion to dismiss the complaint should be in his favor, this paper book would appear in drug stores, book stores for sale, freely accessible throughout the entire community.

On this subject, Freeman Lewis, executive vice-president of Pocket Books, Inc., publisher of this book (R. 56), testified (R. 61) that his company does no advertising in books but puts them through racks seen in drug stores and cigar stores. It is sold and distributed (R. 70) through a group known as independent wholesalers, some 800 of them, in the United States and Canada.

Approximately 50 per cent of outlets for such books are drug stores (R. 70); the rest would be 5 and 10 cent stores, book stores, department stores, cigar stores and newstands. In the drug stores they are displayed. [10]

This witness further testified (R. 71) that some of the places mentioned, including drug stores, sell school supplies, and some of these stores are located near schools.

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[9]

While it is with reluctance that we incorporate this type of literature in the printed record, we deem it essential to a clear understanding of the questions presented and in support of our theory that in this book, because of the volume and character of such matter, obscenity is the dominant effect.

[10]

It is a fair inference drawn from well-known facts that such books sold in drug stores where high school youngsters congregate, reach those whom the Michigan statute is designed to protect.

III

The Argument

Since it would not prove helpful at this point to collate the host of judicial decisions and other expressions of opinion in the conflict between constitutional liberty and unrestrained license in the publication and sale of pornographic or near-pornographic literature,[11] we merely offer a few suggestions to aid the Court in determining whether probable jurisdiction should be noted:

1. Since the words "obscene, lewd or lascivious," as employed in the Michigan statute here challenged, have been deemed permissible in describing a criminal offense, without unconstitutional vagueness, and since books are subject to control if lewd, obscene or profane, *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire,* 315 U.S. 568, jurisdiction of this Court is not sustained by *Winters v. New York,* 333 U.S. 507, cited for that purpose on page 3 of appellant's jurisdictional statement. Moreover, as noted by Mr. Justice Reed in *Winters,* the Court goes far to uphold state statutes that deal with offenses, difficult to define, when they are not entwined with limitations on free expression, 333 U.S. at 517. Nor, we venture to say, are the phrases "tending to incite minors to violent or depraved or immoral acts," or "manifestly tending to the corruption of the morals of youth" too vague to stand the test of constitutionality when coupled as they are in § 343 of the Michigan penal

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[11]

E.g. please see: Literature, the Law of Obscenity, and the Constitution, Minn. Law Review, Vol. 38, p. 295; Symposium on Obscenity and the Arts, Vol. XX, Duke University School of Law, No. 4, Autumn 1955; Report of Select Committee on Current Pornographic Materials, House Report No. 2510, 82nd Congress, 2d Session, Dec. 31, 1952.

code with the permissible words "obscene, immoral, lewd or lascivious." Please see also, *Jordan v. DeGorge*, 341 U.S. 223, holding that the phrase "crime involving moral turpitude" does not lack sufficiently definite standards and that the statute considered by the Court was not unconstitutional for vagueness.

2. Since the "chief purpose" of the constitutional guaranty of liberty of the press is "to prevent previous restraints upon publication," [12] and inasmuch as Michigan's legislative proscription of the obscene does not establish censorship, jurisdiction of this Court is not sustained by *Burstyn v. Wilson*, 343 U.S. 495, *Gelling v. Texas*, 343 U.S. 960, or by *Superior Films v. Department of Education*, 346 U.S. 587, [13] likewise cited for that purpose in appellant's jurisdictional statement, pp. 3 and 14.

Burstyn v. Wilson, supra, 343 U.S. 495, condemns provisions of the New York Education Act which forbid the commercial showing of any motion picture film without a license and authorize denial of a license on a censor's conclusion that a film is "sacrilegious," as a prior restraint on freedom of speech and of the press under the First Amendment, made applicable to the States by the Fourteenth Amendment. *Gelling v. Texas, supra*, 346 U.S. 960, merely followed *Burstyn* and *Winters*, with a concurring opinion by Mr. Justice Frankfurter that in his view the ordinance in question lacked definiteness, and a concurring opinion by Mr. Justice Douglas condemning the evil of prior restraint through censorship. Likewise, *Superior Films*,

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[12]

Near v. Minnesota, 283 U.S. 697, 713.

[13]

Cited in appellant's statement sub nom Commercial Pictures Corporation v. Regents, 346 U.S. 587.

supra, 346 U.S. 587, merely reversed judgments of Ohio and New York without opinion, on the strength of *Burstyn,* while Mr. Justice Douglas and Mr. Justice Black, concurring, once again cited *Near v. Minnesota,* 283 U.S. 697, in condemning censorship. Obviously, since the Michigan legislature has not set up a censorship over the sale of books, these decisions of the Court have no application.

3. Counsel urge in their jurisdictional statement, p. 12, that § 343 of the Michigan Penal Code by use of the word "containing" obviates a fair consideration of the work as a whole, or the dominant purpose of the publication, thus impinging on the guaranteed constitutional freedom of press. And it is said that "at present, most federal and state courts in which the question has been considered, have explicitly adopted the requirement that a book must be judged as a whole, not by its parts taken out of context," citing:

United States v. One Book-Ulysses, 2 Cir., 72 F. 2d 705;

United States v. Levine, 2d Cir., 83 F. 2d 156;

Parmalee v. United States, D.C. Cir., 113 F. 2d 729;

Walker v. Popenoe, D.C. Cir., 149 F. 2d 511;

Halsey v. N.Y. Society, 234 N.Y. 1, 4;

Commonwealth v. Gordon, 66 Pa. D. & C. 101; affirmed sub. nom. *Commonwealth v. Feigenbaum,* 166 Pa. Super. 120; 70 A. 2d 389;

State v. Lerner (Ohio C.P. 1948), 81 N.E. 2d 282;

New American Library of World Literature v. Allen, N.D. Ohio, 114 F. Supp. 823.

It is our position: (a) that the Michigan law when properly construed does not obviate the rule in *Ulysses, supra;* (b) that doubt is cast upon applicability of such a rule as a constitutional test and Michigan in exertion of State police power may protect her youth from the corrupting influence of obscene books and citizens of the state from the evil results of juvenile delinquency; [14] and (c) even though the rule in *Ulysses* be applied, the book here in question, viewed as a whole, is dominantly obscene while its distribution in cheap, paper-cover format through drug store outlets is obviously intended for minors.

a. Section 343 of the Michigan Penal Code among other things proscribes the sale of "any book . . . *containing* obscene descriptions . . . manifestly tending to the corruption of the morals of youth," and it is upon the word "containing" that appellant's counsel lay stress. It is noteworthy, however, that the section does not read "containing *any* obscene . . . descriptions" and as we view it, if the *Ulysses* rule is applicable, the book in question here may be judged as a whole, or its dominant effect may be considered. It is on this ground, we think, that the Ohio cases cited in appellant's statement may be distinguished from the case at bar and one from the other.

Thus in *State v. Lerner, supra,* (Ohio C.P. 1948), 81 N.E. 2d 282, Judge Struble considered and struck down as unconstitutional § 13035 G.C.O., as amended, which penalized the sale etc. of an obscene book, magazine, etc., "*not wholly obscene* but containing lewd or lascivious articles, advertisements" etc. But in *New American Library of World Literature v. Allen,* 114 F. Supp. 823, the court held

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[14]

Indeed it might be said that Michigan, if its legislature so ordained, could without constitutional offense adopt the much-criticized, outmoded code of mid-Victorian morals.

that a city ordinance prohibiting sale or distribution of any book etc. "of *any* obscene or immoral nature" might be read as proscribing books of "*an*" obscene or immoral nature, and as thus read, the ordinance might be construed in harmony with the modern test of obscenity as not proscribing books that merely contain "*some*" obscenity. Thus construed, the validity of the ordinance was upheld as against the contention that it violated freedom of the press. [15]

b. It is significant, however, that the "modern rule" had its genesis in *United States v. One Book-Ulysses, supra,* not as a test of constitutionality under the First and 14th Amendments, but rather as a rule of statutory construction or as a test to determine as a matter of fact in a given set of facts and circumstances whether a designated book was "obscene." Thus, in *Ulysses* it was stated at the outset of Judge Augustus Hand's opinion that the appeal "raises sharply the question of the proper interpretation of section 305 (a) of the Tariff Act of 1930 (19 USCA § 1305-a)." And he concluded that the book as a whole did not fall within the statute. Judge Manton, who for all his subsequent faults, was a good lawyer and sound judge, vigorously dissented. [16]

No statute was declared infirm by the second circuit in *United States v. Levine,* 83 F 2d 156, but there the charge of the trial judge led to error in construing and applying

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[15]

What was condemned in this case and duly restrained by injunction was a censorship conducted by a chief of police without, however, imposing any restraint upon his power to enforce the ordinance by arrest and prosecution.

[16]

Citing: Rosen v. U.S., 161 U.S. 29; Dunlop v. U.S., 165 U.S. 486; U.S. v. Dennett, 39 F. 2d 564 and others.

the postal laws. The instruction deemed erroneous was to the effect that in a prosecution for sending obscene advertisements through the mails, the statute was to protect the young and immature and ignorant and those who were sensually inclined and that the jury should regard the effect of books on their minds rather than on mature and highly intelligent people, and that the statute condemned a book which contained a single passage which would excite lustful or sensual desires. While the court deemed this instruction reversible, Judge Learned Hand added, p. 157, that "our reversal does not mean that on another trial the proper standard can under no circumstances refer to adolescents," stressing the distinction between a sale to a youth and a general sale. [17]

In *Parmalee v. United States,* D.C. Cir., 113 F. 2d 729, another prior restraint upon publication was involved, libel, confiscation and destruction of an obscene book so alleged under the Tariff Law of the United States. The court repudiated the Hicklin Rule, Mr. Associate Justice Vinson dissenting in a well-reasoned opinion, 113 F. 2d at 738.

An order of a postmaster barring plaintiff's pamphlet from the mails *without a hearing* was deemed a violation of due process in *Walker v. Popenoe,* D.C. Cir., 149 F. 2d 334.

Section 1141 of the New York Penal Law provides that a person who sells any obscene, lascivious, indecent or disgusting book is guilty of a misdemeanor. The defendant in *Halsey v. New York Society,* 234 N.Y. 1, by complaint lodged with a magistrate caused the arrest and prosecu-

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[17]

At bar, while the sale was in a sense "general," 50% of the books were sold in drug stores where school children congregate and where school supplies are sold.

tion of the plaintiff for selling such a book and the latter was acquitted. He brought suit for malicious prosecution. The court of appeals held, *inter alia*, that in such an action

> "whether a book, the work of a great author, written in admirable style, which has become a part of classical literature and which has been widely sold but which contains many indecent paragraphs, is of such a character as to justify the reasonable belief that its sale was a violation of section 1141 of the Penal Law, is a question for and properly submitted to the jury in an action for malicious prosecution. . . . "

Certain it is that in *Halsey*, the New York statute was not deemed unconstitutional.

While it is true that constitutional considerations governed state courts in the Pennsylvania and Ohio cases cited by appellant, his counsel, unless we are much mistaken, has failed to point to a Federal decision striking down a State law on the ground that its provisions obviated application of the so-called "modern rule." The closest approach to consideration of such a question was *Doubleday & Co., Inc. v. New York*, 335 U.S. 848, affirming by equally divided vote, and without opinion, a conviction under Section 1141 of the New York Penal Law. In fact, no opinions were written by any court, except for a dissenting opinion by Judge Perlman.

c. During oral presentation of the case of *Doubleday* to this Court, 17 LW 3119, while speaking of a book which in our view "contains" obscenity and pornography in lesser volume that those passages found in THE DEVIL RIDES OUTSIDE, counsel for the State of New York merely said:

"The statute on which the judgment rests is valid. A reading of the book by this Court will demonstrate that the finding of obscenity is reasonable. I therefore submit that the judgment below should be affirmed."

We would close with this thought: the book now under scrutiny is, we respectfully submit, dominantly pornographic as tested by the Hicklin Rule or the modern doctrine. This is not a borderline case. The day may come when a book will be condemned by some Michigan court because it contains a paragraph or two of obscene import. Here, however, the entire volume is permeated with obscenity. And when the excerpts published in this motion as Appendix "A" [most reluctantly], are restored to context, it will be found, we respectfully submit, despite the opinions of expert witnesses to the contrary, that the book considered as a whole is indecent and obscene.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that our motion to dismiss should be granted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas M. Kavanagh
Attorney General of the State of Michigan

Edmund E. Shepherd
Solicitor General of the State of Michigan

Daniel J. O'Hara
Assistant Attorney General
Counsel for Appellee

The Capitol, Lansing 2, Mich.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX "A"

Copy of People's Exhibit 2, filed with Defendant's Application for Leave to Appeal to Michigan Supreme Court.

"THE DEVIL RIDES OUTSIDE"

Author: John H. Griffin
Publisher: Pocket Books
Distributor: Ludington News
Withheld: 2-26-54

(Excerpt 1 from Page 4)

Those damned sons-of-bitches in our government!

He explains with luminous pride how he personally, after having first explored each girl's potentialities to the fullest, saw to it that only the most interesting and accomplished of them stayed on to satisfy the physical needs of his clients.

"Nowhere, nowhere, M'sieu—not even in Paris—could you find such wonderful girls at such reasonable prices."

"Too bad I didn't come here sooner," I tell him.

I offer him another cigarette and he cranes his head in my direction. His face, reflected in the lights, is sober.

"Listen, my friend," he says urgingly, without taking the cigarette from his lips, "I know some girls in the City. Let me drive you there and we can each get one for the night."

(Excerpt 2 from Page 8)

Lips seen close with their fine ridges and their wetness, and the feel of a belly against your belly, of a belly beneath your mouth—moving, live, warm.

I look at the straw mattress of my cot and at its covering roughness of blanket, and I remember the good bed and white linens of last night, and how they covered a nakedness of breasts and navel and warm thighs, and smooth,

sweet-smelling flesh of shoulder and back. And I am sick for wanting the safety of that bed, for wanting to breathe the breath of another and to wake in the night and feel her against me.

(Excerpt 3 from Page 9)

Sometime in the night I awaken and reach for covers which aren't there. In a half-dream I feel for the crease of her belly and find only the unyielding stiffness of evil-smelling straw beneath the rough muslin mattress cover. Sleep is a torture of discomfort.

(Excerpt 4 from Page 26)

"M'sieu!" he says reproachfully—"please! I'm not a pimp, after all. Slightly tinged with pimpishness perhaps, but never sinking to such depths, really. If you think—"

(Excerpt 5 from Page 27)

"I don't think you like to sleep by yourself. You're as bad as I used to be. I bet if I could find you a nice, sweet-smelling girl—"

(Excerpt 6 from Page 31)

"These bastards! These ignorant bastards!"

(Excerpt 7 from Page 32)

She is completely sexless—the sort of woman with whom one sleeps, with whom one makes love merely because she's there beside you and it's easy to do. Above all, the sort of savagely fecund creature who can't be breathed upon without becoming pregnant.

(Excerpt 8 from Page 58)

Instead of the stain of last night's dream, there is the brightness of freshly washed and ironed sheets. One of the monks has changed my bed and knows of the secret dream, and of the fever of the night.

(Excerpt 9 from Page 65)

I long for Paris—to be warm, and to get drunk, and to be happy and shallow, and to know a bed and a woman, and to hear noises and see lights . . .

I leak on the ground. It makes a terrible noise; it seems I shall never finish.

(Excerpt 10 from Page 78)

I think of sleeping warm sleep, with an arm thrown across the soft belly of my Lucette.

(Excerpt 11 from Page 80)

"Tell me, do you ever hear from that girl of yours back in Paris?" "Not a word."

(Excerpt 12 from Page 81)

He grins. "Just like I told you, she's probably with somebody else. How long you been without a girl now?"

"Six weeks, about."

"Oh, la! That's a long time. You must be bursting."

"It's too cold to burst, Salesky," I laugh.

He leans his head close to me, grinning. "When you were in Paris, for example, did you ever go to the Bois de Boulogne at night?"

"Naturally. What student hasn't?"

"The best in all Paris is in the forest there. And free, too," he nods. "A man can get any kind of girl there."

I say nothing. The road is covered with ice and Salesky's cab moves still more carefully. He stops for a moment to relight his pipe.

"Tell me, M'sieu," he says above the shifting of gears, "While you were with your girl did you fool around with anyone else?"

"No!" I answer sharply. "What kind of a person do you think I am? She was a nice girl and I never thought of going to any one else."

"Honest?" He sounds incredulous.

"Honest. I was absolutely faithful to her. Oh, occasionally when she was spending a week end at home I'd find myself another girl, but not often."

"I have a girl friend on this side of the River—Made Rouen, she runs a little spice shop. She's given me two children, which is more than my wife ever did. Is it bad for a man to love his wife and yet want children by another woman?" His face becomes serious. Opening the window he empties pipe ashes outside.

I don't answer.

"Anyway," he goes on, "there's not a woman in the Village who wouldn't like to have me in her bed—or you, M'sieu, or any other man. But they're mean. They dream

(Excerpt 13 from Page 82

of it and condemn me, Salesky, because I've done it with somebody else. I tell you, it's a devil's paradise here."

"I can't believe that, my friend. These people seem all right. Besides, you'd be talked about anywhere in the world for keeping two women to sleep with."

"Would they run and tell my wife?" he says angrily. "Would they keep watch on my mistress's house, and count the times, and run tell my wife? No. But that's what they do here. They're bitches. Oh, there are a few good ones here, but they keep to themselves." She associates with the other bitches without being a bitch herself . . . Ah, look at that pretty girl there. Don't often see one that good-looking."

He jams on the brakes. The car skids to a halt near a young girl walking with her back to us. She turns and walks hesitatingly toward the car.

"Look at that, M'sieu," Salesky whispers rapturously. "Those little breasts—how'd you like to have a handful of that, for . . .

The girl approaches his open window and he asks, in an

exaggeratedly lecherous Parisian accent, if we can't take her somewhere. She giggles a flushed refusal, and we drive on.

"Salesky, you fool, you embarrassed the poor kid half out of her wits."

"But no, she was pleased. Couldn't you see that? She'll be lost in daydreams all week now, thinking of a big hulk of a man like yourself. At night she'll lay against her pillow, imagining it's you. We did her a favor, I tell you."

"You bark loud, my friend," I taunt. "But I bet you'd have been lost if she'd got in with us."

"Oh, it wasn't for myself, M'sieu," he grins. "It was for you."

(Excerpt 14 from Page 83)

"You could've cooled her off a little in the back seat. You could've sprinkled her little garden for her, eh?"

"Look," he says, "be a good boy and do me a favor." I hesitate, holding the door half-open. "Sure. What is it?" "My girl lives across the way, and I don't get to see her often. I'm always watched. But the streets are deserted now. If you were to stay in the car while I went in, none of these bitches would suspect. I'll make it short, M'sieu, just a few minutes."

(Excerpt 15 from Page 84)

"Wasn't she there?" I ask.

"Yes, she was there."

"Was something wrong?"

"Not at all, M'sieu. Didn't want to keep you waiting in the car. Thanks a thousand times for helping me. It was wonderful—but quick, eh? Quicker than you could have handled it, young buck that you are. I didn't even take off my coat, M'sieu."

"Yes, without taking off my coat. 'Onto the bed with you!' I shouted at her. 'Onto the bed, my belle!' And

zoom! her needle was good and well threaded. Wonderful how these things work, eh?"

"Oh, shut up, shut up. No one else could've talked me into such a thing. But if you need a witness let me know. I'll swear you were under the car all the time."

(Excerpt 16 from Page 94)

"Also, there's a girl in Paris, Father. We lived together as students years ago. And when I returned after the war we got a flat together. It's impossible for me to be in Paris without eventually going back to her."

From the warmth sitting beside me the voice asks quietly, "You do not think she would understand, my son?"

"Yes, she'd understand," I reply, "and approve. It's not her fault. It's mine."

"Perhaps you could marry her?"

"I suppose I could, but it's not like that, Father. We aren't in love. We're just used to each other. We pool our money, and she does the cooking and washing. She's still in art school. It's always been a convenience for both of us. Two poor students can live well that way. We're good comrades, we sleep well together. But she doesn't want me for a husband and I don't want her for a wife."

"Have you had no children with this arrangement?"

"No, Father. We've been careful."

(Excerpt 17 from Page 104)

When a man loves a woman, then—and only then—will the climax come in the performance of the sex act and not in the contemplation of it.

(Excerpt 18 from Page 115)

I look at her and I want her. I want to have her in a filth as great as the filth of my feelings. But she leans forward, and I know the stink of her fat folds. Without speaking I leave. But the harm has been done. My legs become

weak, and my face burns with the uncontrollable desire to find something to take into a bed.

(Excerpt 19 from Page 116

"It must be very difficult, Madam," I say to her, fighting to keep my voice even, "when once you you've been married, to get used to living without love."

"Ah yes, Monsieur," she says softly. "It is—very difficult."

"That relationship between a man and a woman can be made such a beautiful thing," I say musingly, and then, forcing deep sympathy into my voice, "I've never been married but I've had many girls, and I know what it can mean. I've always thought of it as a great privilege."

My stomach prods me to hurry. I know my way on this ground. I am at home with such disconcerting inanities. But this is too rushed, too obvious—too laughably obvious.

She smiles, looking at her cup. "You're quite a Don Juan, Monsieur. You embarrass me."

"Not a Don Juan at all, Madame. I'm just giving you credit for being what you are—a beautiful woman of the world. But you must forgive me. I'm being honest. I

(Excerpt 20 from Page 117)

think we both want the same thing, and I think we can help each other. If I'm wrong I apologize."

"You're really very nice, Monsieur"—nonchalantly, with ease and grace of manner. "Perhaps we could have dinner tonight?"

"That would be fine. But look, I must return after dinner and we have an afternoon before us. Let me get a room at the hotel where we can be warm. We can visit there until dinner time." My eagerness catches her, coloring her throat into a blush with the beginnings of desire. She smiles a yes without answering. I pay the two checks, take her arm, and we go to the hotel. The hotel keeper and his

wife, who remember this young man, smile openly, delighted at my luck. They give me a room with bath and have the grace not to mention that we have no bags. My warmth toward them grows.

The room is heated—blessed heat. I help her off with her wraps, with the touches such closeness indicates. We sit on the bed and light cigarettes, feeling frozen feet beginning to come to life. The actors of the play continue acting, for it's not yet the time when acting can cease. With a loud but honestly felt sigh, I take her hand in my own to study it, and her pressure answers mine. "You don't know what it means to hold someone's hand again," I tell her.

"I feel the same way. You're very sympathetic, my friend."

She glances up at me—quickly, half-tentatively.

"And you're very beautiful."

We fondle hands and then arms, until words die in a vast, sobbing, all-engulfing joining of our mouths. The approach is forgotten as the kiss becomes its own fever. Burning outpouring of her tensions into me and mine into her, resolving all tensions into the health and strength of ministrations from a common source. Our breaths catch like two people who drink too long after great thirst. The feverish intensity of starvation flows out from us and we relax our bodies, fainting against each other in relief as muscles melt

(Excerpt 21 from Page 118)

and the kiss insinuates itself as a pure line of pleasure between us. Now the cauterizing initial healing has taken place. Now the therapy of a needed kiss is accomplished. Now we can take pleasure one from the other. The dissonance, the ugliness leave, and a clumsiness of beginnings gives way to the ineffable grace of animal responses. As the soul is purged of its hermetic smallness, of its grit of modesty, the demands of our bodies become more powerful.

Breathless I lift my face from hers. "I can't believe it," I gasp. "Ive never felt like this before—never. It's almost like we're really one. Do you feel it too?"

"Yes, yes," she murmers passionately. "Yes."

I hold her there in wonder, tenderly stroking her cheek, brushing the fine blond hair back from her forehead: small movements of waiting, movements suspended dimensionless. And at last her breathing subsides against my breast, and my hands stop trembling. Reality slowly returns to the room.

"Now," I urge gently when I feel I can speak, "you must let me go and take a bath. I should have done it before, but I didn't know we'd meet. You can rest here on the bed."

"Can't I help you?"

"No, I'd never get through if you did. And I'd rather come back to you here in bed."

Leaving the bathroom door open, I throw my clothes on the floor. While the hot water is still running I step into the tub. The soap spreads and cleans. The nearly forgotten luxury of soap bubbles on wetness of skin is enchanting. I soap and rinse again and again in the warm water. There is no longer any struggle between my two selves. We're both very happy. Poor Father Clement! I smile, imagining that he imagines me in a movie.

"You're awfully slow, my dear," comes her voice from the bedroom.

"Are you in bed?"

"Yes, and I'm lonely."

"But I haven't had a bath in three months."

"Oh, la! Then take plenty of time."

(Excerpt 22 from Page 119)

I splash about in the water. "Come in here, won't you?" I call to her. "I need some help."

She enters the steaming room, with a sheet around her,

to find me lying in the tub. "Ah!" she exclaims, "that's pretty, for example."

"Would you please wash my back?"

"With pleasure, M'sieu." She says this in imitation of the broad patois of the farm women. "But how can I wash M'sieu's back unless M'sieu turns over?"

I turn on my stomach in the warm soapy water. In silence she scrubs the length of my back, seriously, as if I were a child. I turn back over, splashing water onto the stone floor.

"Thanks very much."

"Not at all. And I was good about it, eh? No tricks."

"You were wise. It's been a long time since I last made love. I'm very delicate."

She changes the subject: "Tell me, how do you bathe in the Monastery?"

"In a little tub—a foot bathtub—a little at a time. But the cells are unheated and it's impossible to bathe in this weather. But I would have anyway, if I'd known we were going to meet."

"Today is the Feast of St. Hilaire. You wouldn't bathe for him, but you will for me. I'm flattered."

"I doubt if he'd have appreciated it as much as you will. Now if you'll please leave, Madame, I'll dry myself."

"Strange—you let me wash you, and you don't have anything on in the bathtub; and yet you want me to leave while you dry. Why is that?"

"I don't know. It just seems to work that way."

The smiles stop. With the end of my bath approaches the instant of consummation; the beginnings of nervousness in both of us. She returns to the bed.

When I am dry I turn to go to her. Breath catches in my throat, and I run to the bed. Without looking, without thinking, I draw myself into it, under the covers and into the oblivion of her body. We lie close, discovering in blind embrace the secrets of the warmth within us. There's no

time and no reality as arms bring tightness to our embrace,

(Excerpt 23 from Page 120)

as our stomaches press together until they dissolve into one. No longer do we kiss only with our mouths drinking each other—our arms, our legs, our stomachs join in the kiss, becoming fused in a caress that envelops all. Hands descend the length of warm flesh, till they come to rest in the fleshiness of buttocks, the very feel of which fills us with profound drunkenness. Hands search further into our innermost selves, and without losing the thin fine line of sensuality that floats through closed eyelids . . . we become slowly united.

No longer a man and a woman, but a revolving bodiless emotion. Deeply, more deeply into the liquidness of her, into the void of swirling sensation. Slowly like the waves of a warm ocean, inexorable, undulating out of space and time. Blackness and silence in the roaring of two become one. Angles, brilliant behind eyes that swim in detached body, floating in space.

Richness and warmth and coolness of the wet on one's lips. Lips against her face feeling skin pores. And smoothness of soft cheek and shoulder. Squares mist milkily, and from the stillness and the dark the curve mounts immutably rhythmic, in ever-mounting intensity. A new gathering of momentum. And through the darkness an occasional glimpse of concentrated white. Now it begins to grow, this strangeness, turning over and over. Slowly, slowly, turning steadily, and the rhythm follows ever [illegible]wing. And now from the very bottom of a faraway numbness is the quivering beginning of trembling. It's unbearable. The numbness is punctured. Momentum gathers. And the long sigh, unheard, pouring forth from the edges of consummation. From a distance, far within, curving swiftly now, a fast sighing swaying motion curling over and above and around. Beating, beating against the drum of the being, pounding louder

and louder till there can be no more loudness, but increasing steadily into the very pulse of the blood. And now before the eyes, the before-hinted, now-brilliant flashing white, growing and expanding to break spattering against eyelids. And from without, a fog of ever-thickening intensity, sparkling and harsh to imagined sight. Simultaneous welling-up of the heaving exploding brilliance, and the beating, now-pounding rhythm piling sound and muffled

(Excerpt 24 from Page 121)

obscenity, ever expanding above and around, turning faster and faster above the moaned "No! No!" Tightening of the heartbeat, drawing-up of the ribbon. Ecstatic point between life and death when all becomes hermetic and rigid. The pause in space without pausing in movement. The waiting without breathing. The muffled upward surge of the entire being to the crest of the wave, to the very top. Up and up, soaring high onto the peak of noise and heat. The whirling gyrating splash of warning to the mind. Louder now into the head and the brain. Upheaved violence of the belly. This is the flashing of the stars, the cleansing burning of the insides into fervent ash. And the taste of blood grows stronger on the rigid tongue. Finally the broad expansiveness of union, of man's warmness without pain. Sounds descend thinner, slower, draining away to sighing quiet. And the felt pulse of the rhythm faints away to enveloping blackness. The slow easy downhill slide with a final unheard catching of the breath, leading onward and downward until the curve slows to stop against the dark. And down, down again slantingly, quietly to a depth beneath the seas. Beyond movement to stillness. Then the loosening, the resumption of breathing. Gratitude, and the serenity of silent waters.

Heads fall apart. Light returns. There is rest now without moving. Rest with the body spent, the head facing down on the pillow of her shoulder. Rest for a long time

without becoming separated, feeling only the warmth of her breathing and the stir of her hair against my cheek. Life returns. The room becomes real. Without moving away we roll to our sides, still tightly clasped. And we sleep.

For how long I don't know. Without awakening I find myself awake, still enclosed in her arms. She breathes heavily in her sleep. We are no longer united. The room no longer moves. It remains quiet in its smallness, telling the tale better than we could tell it.

The gray light of winter's afternoon filters through the dusty lace curtains beside our bed. A rug on the floor has lost its color through wear and the accumulation of dust. It is a thin, pathetic covering for the blackened wood floors.

(Excerpt 25 from Page 122)

On a gold-fringed overstuffed chair near the window, her clothes are draped-pinks of underclothes and darkness of hose hung neatly over the arm. Through the bathroom door can be seen my clothes, in a filthy pile where I left them. And on the tub a roughness of damp towel hanging at a thrown angle.

Room of heavy shadows lighted only by somber afternoon, and soundless. A room which would be intolerable if I were here alone, but which has taken on a fattish, conniving atmosphere because I am in bed with something human, with something that lives and breathes and sleeps.

In Her dreams she turns on her back. My head rests on her shoulder beneath the blankets. In the microscopic perspective of nearness the coarsely woven pillowcase, white and wrinkled, is brought into clarity of focus. Every thread can be seen, and minute portions of brown starch-stain streak the pattern of freshness. The eye shifts to shoulder flesh and focuses on an inch of skin, seeing pores and smoothness and oiliness and one speck of dryness that irritates—white, flaky, dead. Moving my cheek against it I

brush it away. My head cradled on her shoulder is half-covered with the blanket. We lie here warm and drying—and she sleeps.

Smells from under covers, smells when sight grows tired. Odors of neutral nakedness of flesh. Odors of shoulder and belly and of the dried hint of frenzy, mingling with those of blanket wool and coarse linens. Odors of the sweetness of unperfumed being, captured in a warmth of darkness beneath covers. Profound satisfaction of the senses by touching and breathing, and the sleep of a body in the arms of wakefulness. I raise my leg across her thighs and lie close to her, with the inside of my leg, above her knee, resting on her stomach.

Without opening her eyes she murmurs drowsily, "You're suffocating me, my friend."

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know you were awake." I raise my head. Her eyes open to see a face that has lost its strain, and she smiles. "Are you happy, my darling?" she asks. "It was marvelous. Shall we go again?"

(Excerpt 26 from Page 123)

"No—some other time perhaps. The next time wouldn't equal the first and we'd both begin to regret it."

"But I want you."

"No, please—don't." she reaches down and moves my hand away.

"All right, my dear," I say coolly. "Then let's get up. I can't lie here with you without trying."

"Yes, go into the bathroom and dress," she says almost apologetically. "I'll spread up the bed and get dressed myself."

"Fine—so modesty returns. Very well, Madame, up with you."

I go into the bathroom, sickened at having to put on my filthy clothes again. We continue talking as we dress. Gradually with the ebbing of desire, my resentment leaves.

I become conscious of a growing gratitude toward this woman who has given me so much. I call through the door, "I'll treat you to the best dinner in town—all you can eat. This hotel has excellent food."

She joins me in the bathroom, standing before the mirror combing her hair. "I'm supposed to take dinner in the Village," she says through a mouthful of hairpins. "Maybe we'd better go back."

"Nonsense, don't tell me you're the sort who like to make love and run?"

"No, but food is high here. There's no need for you to spend any more on me."

The thought that I have bought her only a cup of hot chocolate strikes us both as ridiculous, and we laugh like two children.

"Ah," I chuckle, "two and a half francs. You're an expensive woman. But I'm a perfectionist. Unless I fill your stomach from the top this time, I'll feel my work is only half-done."

"You are a pig . . . But really, let's eat somewhere else. These people would think me brazen. They'll suspect what we've been doing."

"And for once their suspicions will be justified. No," I grin, "we'll eat here and give our friends the pleasure of being right about us."

(Excerpt 27 from Page 124)

"But I'm not a brazen woman."

"I know you're not, my dear. But the point is, you've been doing all afternoon just what a brazen woman would do."

"You embarrass me." She is offended. I have gone too far.

"Come now," I say softly, "I'm only joking. You know that. We'll eat wherever you like. And believe me, I want to take you to dinner because I like to be with you, and

not just because I'm grateful."

She lifts her face and smiles. "All right."

"Now, shall I keep this room for a few days? We can come here every afternoon."

"But what about your work at the Monastery? Surely you can't leave that? Didn't you tell me your work was your life, your only passion?" The suggestion of a smile is at the corners of her mouth. "Isn't that what you said?"

"Yes, but not all my life," I mutter, feeling like a fool. "And I find I have other passions, too."

"Even so, I don't think we'd better keep the room. I must tell you, as much pleasure as this has given me and as wonderful as it's been, I'm here for another purpose. I'll confess what we've done, receive penance, and make every effort not to do it again."

I shrug my shoulders. "You're probably right. This couldn't be helped today. I know what you're trying to do and I respect you for it. I'm afraid I've set you back. But it's easy to be virtuous once passion is satisfied. I feel pretty Christian right now, myself. But what shall we do when we feel it again? Can what we've done be so terribly wrong?"

She is silent a moment. "I don't know," she hesitates. "But I'll do as the priest says."

We walk down the carpeted stairs to the lobby. I stop to pay the bill while she waits in the hall near the entrance.

The proprietor feigns surprise when I approach the desk. "But, M'sieu, you arrived only a few hours ago. We can't charge you for a room you've scarcely used. No, there'll be no charge. We'll just put someone else in the room, and since you haven't slept in the bed we won't have to change the linens."

(Excerpt 28 from Page 125)

I put some bills on the desk. "Here, take the money and an extra twenty-five francs for the chambermaid."

"But, M'sieu, I don't understand. Since you haven't slept in the room, what will the chambermaid have to do?"

"Believe me, my friend, the room has been well used. And the chambermaid will more than earn her twenty-five francs."

He would like to know more, but I turn away and join my companion at the door.

(Excerpt 29 from Page 141)

At this hour yesterday we woke in the same bed from a naked sleep; and now it might never have been. At this hour twenty-four hours ago I smelled her shoulder beneath my head, and my hand cupped the naked smoothness of her sleeping belly. Tonight she is cleansed of this and it's never really been. She prays there now—but can she forget a kiss in the small of her back? . . . Lips become dry and I wet them, exhausted. Turning, I listen and forget this bodiless emotion clutching a blackness of rosary beads back there near the door.

I've been one month now without my wife. That's a long time, eh? Only once have I had a woman, and that was because my friend the ambassador wanted me to go with him. We got two girls, good-looking girls, and I examined them. The one he had chosen was eaten up with syphilis, so he didn't get his after all. I managed mine all right, but it wasn't any good.

(Excerpt 30 from Page 154)

"Ah, you are drunk. Your Lucette's at this minute. Forgetting your weight beneath the weight of another."

"Good for her. I'm going to bed."

(Excerpt 31 from Page 166)

"I can't make you out, Doctor. One moment you're a mystic, in love with something intangible to the point of

being poetic, and the next moment you want to get me the worst old whore in the Valley."

(Excerpt 32 from Page 172)

'No, thank you, I don't drink,' or, 'I don't fool with women' (heaven help him), or, 'I don't smoke.' He's a paragon of virtue who's reduced to a nothing by the moral castration of pride—pride in the ability he has to stand alone and above poor bastards like us.

(Excerpt 33 from Page 173)

His voice falters, steadies itself, becomes another singing monotone as the author tells of the unwrinkled firmness of Salome's body and of the fullness of her milk-white breasts, intoxicating to both hand and mouth.

(Excerpt 34 from Page 186)

So I went directly toward the brothel. But this time I was accosted by a pretty girl in the street, and I accepted her quickly before anything could happen. We went into a hotel near the Bibliotheque nationale and got a room. She seemed very nice and I knew that nothing could happen this time to stop it.

First, however, she took all my money—every penny of it. When she had the money she took off her blouse and chemise, but to my horror her body from breast to hips was swathed in heavy tape. She told me she could not do it in the normal way. For some reason I cannot explain I burst into laughter—I roared with laughter. Here I had spent all my money, built up my hopes and my sins, and she destroyed my desire with her broken ribs and her unnatural suggestions. I asked her for my money back, but she refused to give me even car fare home.

(Excerpt 35 from Page 190)

"My friend, I'm without nerves. I've been out slutting all morning." He makes an easy gesture with his hand,

smiling, as if he'd just finished with a woman. We're both satiated with sanctity. Our beings cry for relaxation in the comfortable atmosphere of ribaldry.

"Was she a blonde?" I ask, carrying the upswing of good feelings. "A blonde with hair combed on top of her head, and a Parisian hat?" "Precisely. She was your friend from South Africa. Ah, and you ask me if I have nerves . . ."

"So, you forget your duties toward me to go after my women! And I thought you said you'd rather tie my shoelaces than be between the legs of the most beautiful woman in Paris?"

(Excerpt 36 from Page 191)

"There you are," he says. "Clean-shaven as an expensive whore." I run my fingers lightly over the raw skin. It is smooth and hardens uncomfortably beneath my touch. "I wouldn't know. I never went to an expensive whore."

"You don't know what you've missed," he grins. "But then I guess it's not too different from your cheap ones."

(Excerpt 37 from Page 194)

And in lower circles we adapt ourselves. We laugh at all that crap. We agree that niggers are just as happy as if they had good sense, and that they were a lot happier before people started putting ideas in their heads about

(Excerpt 38 from Page 195)

human rights. We agree that whoever happens to be president is either a son-of-a-bitch or a godsend. We laugh and admit it's not normal for a young man to be without his little ass every once in a while, and that the girls are just waiting to go out behind the barn with us. Or we stand upright and announce that this younger generation is wild as hell, that we weren't brought up that way.

(Excerpt 39 from Page 198)

I remember how I used to sneer at my friend Louis for

sharing his flat with a girl student.

"But it's the only way," he would explain. "No one in school away from home can afford much by himself. But if you can get a nice girl, together you can live well. Monique and I pool our money. She does the cooking and washing, we both do our studying, and we sleep together. It's the best possible arrangement, old man. Together we live twice as well and a lot cheaper.

"But Louis, how can you get any work done? Or do you neglect that part of it?"

"No, no, you don't understand. We're students, our studies come first. We don't fool around with each other till we go to bed, and then just once each night. And tock! we're happy and content. You must try it too. I'll ask Monique to find you someone."

(Excerpt 40 from Page 199)

She asked bluntly, "Tell me, are you a virgin?"

I hesitated, and a flush rose slowly to my cheeks. "No . . ."

She and Louis exchanged glances while I looked at the floor. With his laughter in the background she shook her finger mockingly in my face. "Why, you are," she cajoled. "Now tell me the truth."

"Well, all right." I smiled sheepishly. "Don't rub it in."

"Seriously," Monique went on gently, "you say you haven't been brought up that way. Well, neither have I and neither has Louis, and neither has this girl at school. But it's the only sensible thing, and it's worked for us. Now, let me bring her here to meet you. She just came to Paris a few months ago and she's never been with a man."

"All right, Monique," I acquiesced with a sigh. "May all my maiden aunts forgive me."

(Excerpt 41 from Page 200)

"Very well," she murmured hesitantly, "let's try it for a

while. I think we can get on together."

"Bravo!" shouted the irrespressible Louis. "We'll celebrate the nuptials. But first I'll tell you the rules. Remember you're both students, so studies come first. If you start making love three times a day your studies will be ruined. So you make love only once, and that's at night after all the work's been done."

"Oh, shut up, Louis," I laughed. "We'll work that out ourselves." We laughed easily, for there were four of us.

But the next morning, when we had finished moving into our flat and were alone together for the first time, there was a heavy timidity between us. I tried to overcome her doubts—which were also mine.

"Now look, Lucette, we're going to try living together. Neither of us has been around very much or had much experience. I'm willing to do whatever you like as long as I get my work done. If you want to make love I'm here; if not I won't bother you. It's bound to happen sooner or later because we're sleeping in the same bed. But I promise I won't do anything against your wishes.

"But I have no right to refuse you," she said. "After all, you're taking me in.

"No, I'm not. You don't owe me a thing. We're sharing the flat and the work, that's all. I think boys probably like this sort of arrangement better than girls do. That's the reason I don't want to do anything you wouldn't like. Shall we just let things work themselves out?"

"You're very nice," she said gratefully. "Yes, that would be best." And my own relief, unspoken, matched hers.

(Excerpt 42 from Page 201)

"She hasn't come in yet, she's still at school." We burst into laughter, shaking hands. "Ah, this is marvelous, Louis. I can never thank you enough."

"There's nothing like it, is there? Having your own

place, paying your own bills, doing your own shopping, and—"

"Having your own babies?"

"You haven't got to her already, have you?" he asked with concern.

"No, but look—I'm as dumb as anything about these things. What must I do to keep from getting a baby?"

"You dumb bastard, it's a good thing you asked." He reached in his pocket. "Here, take one of these and use it tonight. Tomorrow I'll get you some pills for her."

"You don't think she'll mind if I use this thing?"

"If she's as ignorant as you she won't even know it. Anyway it'll only be for one time. The pills are a lot better. Do you think things are going to be all right?"

"I don't know. She's awfully nice, but from the way she talks I don't think she's too anxious to go to bed with me. I promised not to touch her unless she wanted me to."

"Oh, no!" Louis moaned, holding his head. "A girl like her isn't going to come right out and ask you to do it. You've got to make the try, and then if she's not quite ready, why all right. One thing, though—a little advice. It might hurt her. If she acts like it's hurting her, just stop. That way the pain'll go away and she'll enjoy it."

(Excerpt 43 from Page 202)

Each scrupulously ignoring, but carefully watching, the other, we changed our outer clothing in the bedroom as nonchalantly as an old married couple. Our small talk was casual and full of delight. Without embarrassment she gathered up my shirt and pants and put them on a hanger in the wardrobe, murmuring something about washing them the next day.

(Excerpt 44 from Page 203)

"You know, my friend, I was just thinking," said Louis, serious in his role of confidant and adviser—"when did you last have a bath?"

"It's been over a week now. What do you do for a bath in the flat?"

"We bring a tub into the kitchen. But you can hardly do that in front of Lucette when you haven't even slept with her. It's very important, you know. She won't like it if you aren't clean and good-smelling. It'll spoil it for her." He stopped and turned to me. "Why don't we go to a public bath right now and get you cleaned up? Later on, when you've got used to each other, you can bathe in your kitchen."

"But I can't afford those public baths, Louis. You know that."

(Excerpt 45 from Page 204)

"Nonsense. It's only three francs, or two and a half if you get the shower. I tell you what: you go to that bath across the street and I'll get a cheaper bottle of wine. Here's two and a half francs. A shower will be good enough and it won't cost as much, but take a good one. Wash several times with plenty of hot water. I'll come for you when I find the wine."

At the entrance an old crone collected my money, complaining because I didn't have enough to tip her. When I had finished my shower I pounded on the door of the stall and she brought me a clean towel, suggesting that a youth of my obvious qualities should have a girl and she knew just the one. Laughing, I chased her out, telling her that if I couldn't have her I'd have none of her proteges.

Suddenly Louis asked thoughtfully, "Have you two kissed yet?"

"Not yet."

"Then you must do it right now. Go on, go on. I pronounce you man and mistress as of now. A nice kiss."

Later, for no apparent reason, Monique burst into laughter.

"What's so funny?" I asked her.

"I was thinking of our poor maiden aunts."

(Excerpt 46 from Page 205)

"Oh, no!"

Louis raised his glass. "To the maiden aunts," he proclaimed, and took a long swallow of wine. "Think of them," he went on, wiping his mouth. "They are, I imagine, warty and bulbous old things, at this moment asleep hugging much-battered water bottles. No, no, wait, let me think—that's no fitting desecration of maiden aunts. They're probably covered with stiff hairs in the wrong places." He turned to me. "When we're doctors, my friend, we must pledge each other we'll pluck out all the hairs from wrong places on warty old maiden aunts."

"Louis," Monique admonished, "you're impossible and unrefined. Why do I stay with such as you?"

"Because of the children, remember?"

"Oh, of course, because of the children we'll have one day. Did you know, Lucette, that Louis and I have decided we're in love? Yes, we'll throw away the pills one day and become respectable married people."

(Excerpt 47 from Page 206)

"Well"—I faked a yawn—"think I'll go on now. How long will you be?"

"At least two hours. You go on to sleep."

My cheeks were on fire. She didn't want it. She was studying late so that I'd be asleep when she came to bed. Controlling my disappointment and embarrassment, I murmured, "Tell me, Lucette, do you want me to stay awake and wait for you? I must know. If there's a chance I'll stay awake, but if you say no, I'll forget it and go on to sleep."

She didn't lower her eyes. "I'm awfully sorry. I have an assignment of drawings I've got to get in. What shall I do? Do you want me to wake you up when I come to bed? If you want me to I will."

(Excerpt 48 from Page 207)

Later, in the middle of the night, I awakened to hear her quiet breathing beside me. She was asleep, and we were in the dark, in the warm dark night of our new home. We were alone—two people breathing in a single smallness of surroundings with only the intimacy of our bed and our sleep-drugged bodies. And outside, all the city of Paris lived its nocturnal life in a million different ways. In the flat all was lost. There was no longer a living room and a kitchen. All was lost in darkness except what we could feel, except the immediate now of bed and covering and air. I lay there not touching her, happly to hear her even breathing, to know that beside me this living warmth of a stranger—a young girl with breasts and belly and knees and heart—was mine without my having yet possessed her; a stranger of whom I knew nothing but who was with me in the same bed, safe from the desolate loneliness of the world of humanity about us. We occupied our tiny space within the cellular framework of a great city. Others lived and slept and ate and wept above and below and on all sides; but we were there alone, hidden from them as they from us, with our own steams and pains and joys and inner liquidnesses.

I rolled against her in the dark. She allowed her body to relax in my arms. She did not turn nor pull away. She was warm. A warmth of sleeping flesh covered with night clothes, drugged by sleep, without thought or intention. The night was a vacuum permitting instincts to dissolve the counterpoint of background and timidity into pure feeling. Our arms found one another and we lay a long time face to face, with nothing but the softness of her breasts to give me consciouness. We slept again fitfully, automatically clasping each other against the unknown which lay beyond our bed in every direction. Finding delicious quenching safety in the embrace. Breathing pure smells of clean bed-

(Excerpt 49 from Page 208)

clothes and clean night clothes and tiny spots of bareness. Again we slept, and awoke twisted. The bed creaked as we straightened clothing with an understood union of movement, and settled once more into the sleep from which we hadn't really awakened. Comfortable, fitting close. Warmth of arms under arms, of legs between legs, of the nothingness of stomachs separated only by wrinkled cloth.

Gradually through the night—imperceptibly somehow, without beginnings—clothing which separated us was unbuttoned and pulled aside. In a dream, unconsciously, legs found their comfort. The wetness of too much covering formed where flesh heated against flesh. Lips touched lightly, growing stronger but never really strong. Hands fumbled with flimsy night things. In the dumbness of night the tension of these half-gestures grew. We tightened our clasp and soon were pressed side by side. There was a stabbing of liquid warmth. Nerves and muscles relaxed to become tense again. I knew the waiting, the inevitable seeking of man's insides to become woman's insides as the embrace brought us without touches into greater tightness . . . until we were united. Until there could be no more pressing of stomach to stomach. Until the fullness of one became the fullness of the other. Clasping with no need of movement, with an inner deliciousness of drunken newness that throbbed and was concentrated, that searched and was feverish. The brain descending from head in a giant curve, deserting head to take its place in a contracting belly. All lines of feeling leading into the darkness under covers. All life dying except the one consummated in an animal ecstasy of nerve against nerve, of nerve nourishing nerve, of nerve ravishing nerve. Till it could no longer be borne and nerve must assuage nerve with its heavy balm, its warming sedative of liquid gratefulness.

She pulled her head away, breathing heavily, and slowly her breathing returned to normal and her heart stopped

pounding against mine. We did not draw apart after it was over. We returned to the close plane of sleep from which we had strayed only a few emotions. Still clasped together, I remember murmuring, "Thank you," close to her ear, and feeling her head move against my mouth in wordless nod of acknowledgment. Later, perhaps only a moment later, a last fleeting thought that I'd forgotten to use the thing Louis had given me in the afternoon. But the thought held no worry. The brain was back in the head. My happiness was unblemished and complete.

(Excerpt 50 from Page 210)

"So you're happier here than you would be kissing the breasts of your Lucette? I don't believe you. Your piety is a milk-fed thing. It disgusts me a little."

(Excerpt 51 from Page 216)

"You won't have any servants?"

"No, there's only Madame Renee, and she's a high-born woman. I can hardly see her stooping down to pull up my underwear pants can you?"

"Not exactly, though I imagine it'd do her old heart more good than harm. You'd probably be hot as a poker."

"Not after that. She's got snow-white hair."

(Excerpt 52 from Page 217)

He laughs. "She'd be so grateful, and in the dark you'd never know the difference."

"I may come back in a week or so and see how you're settled. By then Madame Renee should be pregnant."

(Excerpt 53 from Page 232)

Sleeping alone on a whore's couch.

(Excerpt 54 from Page 239)

I hesitate, putting my hand on her arm. "Look, you can

trust me," I say slowly. "I know I shouldn't ask, but we're two of a kind, surrounded by uncongenial people. Now that I have my villa, why not come and see me? You could go into Town and let yourself be seen there, then return to my place late at night. We could have a couple of hours to sleep together and no one would ever know. I have a good fire, and we could—I mean—"

(Excerpt 55 from Page 288)

Reeling with repressed anger I lean against the door. "If it's any of your business," I mutter, "I'm going to Town and find a good, healthy, simple-minded peasant girl who'll sleep with me and make me forget what's happened. And what we do will seem clean compared to what you and I have just been through."

(Excerpt 56 from Page 290)

"Silly, it was Madame Marceaux. You've met her, haven't you?"

"I've seen her."

"I'm not too fond of her, but she did bring some amusing news. I'm sure you've heard of Salesky, the taxi driver? Well, there's a girl here, Madame Rouen, who's his mistress. She has a little spice shop."

"I've heard that. What about it?"

"We believe she's pregnant again. Poor thing, I feel half-sorry for her."

"Where's her husband?"

"Oh, he was a prisoner of war for several years, and during that time she bore Salesky two children. Of course when her husband came back and found out about it, he left her."

"Too bad." I light a cigarette and wait for her to go on.

"Well, the girl's been getting large again, but this time she denies she's pregnant. She claims it's a tumor and says she's going to the City to consult a doctor." She leans for-

ward eagerly "You won't believe this, but two or three days ago she said she was suffering and sent for Madame Marceaux. When Madame Marceaux got there Madame Rouen was in bed, and on the floor by the bed was a bloodstained cloth. Naturally Madame Marceaux asked about it. The girl explained she was menstruating, and pulled another bloody cloth from under the covers. She apologized to Madame Marceaux for being in such a condition, and begged her to get a young girl who works in the store to carry the rags out and burn them. She also asked for a clean cloth. By doing this, you see, she knew Madame Marceaux would be convinced of her innocence."

"And wasn't she?"

"She was until today. Now this will amuse you. Today an old hag—who's the mother of your domestic, by the way—this old hag was cleaning the store, and she found the half-burned carcass of a cat in the stove." Madame Renee laughs piggishly; she seems to think it excessively funny.

I play with a strand of tobacco hanging from my cigarette.

(Excerpt 57 from Page 291)

"And I suppose you good ladies pumped her for all the gory details."

"Of course not. I knew nothing about it till I saw Madame Marceaux this afternoon. But obviously Madame Rouen's pregnant. She planned it, don't you see? She killed the cat and soaked the rags with blood, then sent for one of our better-class women. She didn't realize how soon she'd be found out. Now it's all over the Village and the poor creature's in more disgrace than ever."

(Excerpt 58 from Page 292)

"Did you believe him?"

"Of course I believed him. I was from one of the great families, and he was only an artist. I loved to slip away from school to go visit his studio. That's how he took

advantage of me. But he did love me. And he was honest enough to divorce his wife and marry me."

(Excerpt 59 from Page 304)

"For almost two weeks I dress you every morning. Each time you crawl naked out of that bed without a sign of embarrassment in either of us, because it's something that has to be done. And yet this morning when I open the door and glimpse that same bare ass, I instinctively draw back in the hall till you cover yourself. And you feel the same thing, for you tell me to wait while you struggle to hide what I've already seen so many times."

(Excerpt 60 from Page 305)

"That's right. You and I've both slept with nice women, M'sieu, and seen and felt every part of their bodies. But have you ever tried to pat one of them on the behind the next day? Chances are she slapped you to heaven.

(Excerpt 61 from Page 306)

Look at M'sieu Gide—our greatest writer, and yet he'd like to see marriage between males made legal as it was in ancient times.

"No!" He grins through a cloud of smoke. "Well, now you can have some freedom. You can even get a nice girl in here to stay with you, eh? Maybe Madame Vincent's beginning to—"

"Not her!" I laugh. "She's like your nice modest lady. We're good enough friends, but that's all."

"Tell me, M'sieu—I'm not trying to get personal—but is the talk I've heard true? Did you really have an affair with her? Somehow I've never thought of her as being that type."

I smile: it's a question I would resent anywhere but in France.

"The talk's true, all right," I readily admit. "But she's

really a fine woman, better than most. And she's making amends, you know. She wouldn't let me touch her now."

(Excerpt 62 from Page 308)

"I hear she's been giving you a bad time. What's the matter, won't she let you have it? Or won't you let her have it? Which? She's a good looker for her age. I could tear up her—"

(Excerpt 63 from Page 309)

"My house is open to the public, but I don't want to come home and find the two of you together upstairs. You know I can't risk such things, much as I'd like to."

"All right, M'sieu," he says resignedly. "But I'll pass you an occasional pack of cigarettes. And say, do you need anything else?"

"Yes, but you ought to see him on a party. Now there's a man without a shred of modesty. There's nothing he won't try to do—and right there in front of you—to please the girl he's got. I think you're crazy not to let him find you a girl like he suggested—but that's your business, of course."

I shake my head. "I'm too tied up with the Monastery. Can't afford to take the chance . . . What's his wife like, by the way?"

"You'd get along fine with her. She's much too good for him and he knows it. He loves her and loves to show her off." He swallows the last of his coffee. "You know, you can't help but like Salesky even though his main reason for living seems to be below his waist."

(Excerpt 64 from Page 318)

"Come on, come on, out of bed! I've already lit your fire." Grinning she throws the blankets from my body, bursts into cackling at the sight. "Oops, why the young pup's naked! Ha! Come on, up with you!"—grabbing my ankle, jerking me over, slapping me hard on the behind.

I roar angrily, "Get out of here, old woman!" and try to cover myself, embarrassed and indignant.

She leans back, rocking on her heels with laughter, coarse, dark, laughing like a man. "What's the matter, hey? Ah, he hides himself, for example. Come by the fire. You got nothing to hide from old Mother Nourrie. I seen men lots bigger'n you, and lots uglier. Why, my Papa Nourrie—" She squints and moves her hands to show me how Papa Nourrie is made.

"All right, all right," I interrupt impatiently, "I didn't ask you for an estimate of my sleeping qualities."

(Excerpt 65 from Page 319)

"There, young turnip, and here's a chair. How come you sleep by yourself? Why, you're young and full of sap and you're a fine beauty of a thing."

"You're old, Mother Nourrie, anything would look good to you. Now leave me alone."

She grunts and tosses her shawl across my shoulders, a grinning, half-surprised expression on her cramped face.

"The blood runs good in you, sweet child. Ha! it does me good to see you. Stand up. No? In my day a man stood up for me. It's good to see youth even when you can't feel it any more." I tie my shoes. "You're pagan, old Mother."

"What?"

"Nothing. Hand me my underwear, will you?"

She retrieves my underclothes and examines them carefully, shaking her head slowly from side to side.

"What's wrong?"

"Ha! they're filthy."

"Here," I sigh, "I'll get some clean ones just to please your ignoble old heart."

She gazes at me, clasping her hands. Quickly I put on clean underclothes. She steps close to me, her face serious. "Tell me, fine boy," she says loudly, "you look good and

full and nice-sized, and your whiskers grow healthy and the behind is broad—are you sick?"

"No . . ."

"Then why do you keep a lonely bed? Why waste young muscles this way? It's sad—none of my business—but sad. You ought to be locked to somebody else. Ah, look at you! You got blood and your skin's rich and rosy. You'd be better letting another's hands know you."

"If you don't stop talking, miserable woman!" I tell her —but now I am laughing.

Standing back, she applauds. "Aha! the young garden begins to grow and bud and blossom. Good! Go, young beauty, the country's full of girls who smell of fresh straw. In winter they're green and warm like young plants. Leave this old hag and find them. Break their backs and fill them with children."

(Excerpt 66 from Page 322)

"Good-bye, Mother Nourrie, I'm going to the Monastery." She grins. "Bye-bye, sweetness, bye-bye, young fatness, bye-bye, nice thing, bye-bye Pinkness, bye-bye, prettiness, bye-bye, fresh garden, bye-bye—"

"Oh shut up, won't you?"—laughing.

(Excerpt 67 from Page 323)

She stands solid, hands on hips, glaring. "You tell me to shut up! Wasn't even talking to you."

"No? Then who were you talking to?"

"I was talking to your you-know-what, young boy. I was telling it bye-bye, sweetness, bye-bye, nice thing, bye-bye, prettiness—"

(Excerpt 68 from Page 326)

"That bitch!" exclaims Madame Chevissier spontaneously. "That dirty bitch!"

(Excerpt 69 from Page 365)

We sit alone in the car, very close, and our hands find themselves. There's little time. Placing her hand in my lap I lean against her, and murmur in her ear, "I need you, Marguerite. Won't you help me?"

She doesn't move her hand away. "But we have not time, no place."

"Here and now—I know you want it."

"I'm really a low woman at heart."

(Excerpt 70 from Page 366)

"Good! And we'll dedicate it to Madame Renee. May she inspire us to heights!"

Marguerite giggles as fondlings become excitement and spite.

"So," I whisper, "You think I'm just like her jean* Julien, eh? I'll fix you for that, my precious."

Salesky opens the front door noisily. We sit upright in the back seat, laughing.

"My friend," I tell him gaily, "drive around slowly for half an hour, will you?—and don't look back."

"Aha, M'sieu, as you say." The lecherous smirk on his face shines in the dark.

Wheels crunch slowly through the ice-crusted snow. Salesky whistles to himself. Headlights reflect upward from the rough white ground, upward into the frosty air of night. Lights from the Village fade as we drive into the country and other things more immediate occupy my consciousness: things immediate and warm—for Marguerite is crazed with the need—yet somehow detached. Inner clutchings and desires suddenly become superficial enjoyment of the moment. She bares her breasts. We each become sensations, but my mind can't descend the long curve; it stays in the head. It patiently notices the feel of leather-and-felt upholstery, it hears the tune Salesky whistles softly to himself, it waits half-laughing-and it's pleasant waiting. It's detached. It sees snow from the corner of

its eye and feels her hair beneath its cheek and breathes her breath—but it's not there. It waits, calm in frenzy, almost derisive with the growing of pleasure. It thinks of Madame Renee and grows derisive. It thinks of other waiting faces, dumb faces of people standing in line at the bread shop, each waiting his turn to exchange ration tickets for bread. It's that kind of waiting, waiting on floatings and coarse facial pores and liquidness beneath the mouth. Warmth without heat, heat without burning. Calculated waiting in line with a dumb face and an occasional sigh and a cringing from frenzy. The brain refuses to leave the head. Hands draw the bundle closer beneath and, instead of the flesh, feel the roughness of car seat against wrists. Time passes with thought suspended as we take one step, and then another, nearer the end of the line. And there's finally the ultimate in warmth of breathing against cheek, in sounds of lips and wetness on face, and it's a moment not of concentration but of many things. It's the dumb face's turn now, the exchange of its ration tickets. Leather upholstery squeaking and shoes scraping against the rubber floor-mat and Salesky whistling louder for a moment above the rasping rattles of passion.

(Excerpt 71 from Page 367)

The pressure of drawing closer than close as a reflex, and the waiting to leave. We settle quietly till the gesture of straightening wrinkled clothing gives me permission to go, to move away with a final pat of basic politeness. The arranging of things. The brain settling comfortably and looking out the window, and the one helping the other with hands pulling on clothes and fastening buttons and absent-mindedly dusting wrinkles. The wheels of the car in the snow, and darkness beyond the clear cone of strong headlights. Salesky coughs. I cough in answer and he turns to stare.

"All right, M'sieu?" His voice is saccharine with mock-

ing respect.

"Yes. Take us to the station now."

(Excerpt 72 from Page 382)

Other things become clear. Only now do I understand why Dr. Castelar wished to take me to the worst whore he could find, for I should like to do the same thing with this Michel—to kill the rottenness of his goodness with the health, the humiliation of disgust. But he'd probably try to convert the whore.

(Excerpt 73 from Page 399)

Again it's daylight, and I am plagued with hunger as wakefulness returns. Voices, instantly recognizable as the circle of old ladies.

"Ah, he's awake. And how does M'sieu feel now?" asks the nameless woman who buttoned me.

"I'm fine," I reply, "thanks to the wonderful care of you good ladies." I glance about the room. "Where is the Sister, the nun?"

"But, child," Mother Nourrie says, as she approaches my bed. "You were so mean to her, she left. And right, too. She had no business here. I told her old Mother Nourrie was more used to you." She chuckles. "You spoke some fine French—good outhouse French. This was no place for her."

"But what day is this?" I ask, worried. "And how was I mean to her? What did I say?"

"Damn! This is Wednesday, child. You've been gone to God for four days. As for that slit-tailed monk, you were rich. Such a tongue! Ha, and you tried to comb her hair."

The old ladies laugh thoughtfully.

"Zut!" Mother Nourrie goes on. "Don't feel bad. Slit-tails shouldn't be running around loose like that."

"I tried to comb her hair?" I inquire frowning.

They become hysterical with laughter. Mother Nourrie's eyes stare at her nose as she slaps herself on the leg. "Sure, You don't know what that means, poor thing. I guess they've got it the same as you and me. You tried to get under her robe." I listen horrified. "What?"

"That's right, you tried to get under her robe." The old women, led by Mother Nourrie, laugh harder than ever. I look around at them.

(Excerpt 74 from Page 412)

Snorting, smirking, she asks, "Incidentally, were there any pretty nurses in the hospital?"

"All of them were beautiful," I tell her seriously, "And I violated each one of them twice. Does that satisfy your curiosity?"

(Excerpt 75 from Page 441)

"Why, a doctor friend of mine even suggested that if there's any further delay, we go ahead and have physical contact before marriage. What do you think?"

(Excerpt 76 from Page 442)

"And tell me, do you think maybe I should try to keep her satisfied in the meantime? I've never had any sexual experience, I'm just asking you."

(Excerpt 77 from Page 466)

The delight of Mademoiselle Marthe's talk fills me with a newness of sensation: delight in thinking of someone fresh and young, and of a house and a bed and a permanency of clear marriage. Tremblings of excitement, and the sudden rush of a turbulent past: turbulent past when a woman meant nothing more than a quick cleverness of speech and the arousal of verbal advances, with a triumph consummated only in the sex act.

(Excerpt 78 from Page 474)

"Is everything all right now?" she whispers intimately.

"Did you have enough supper?"

I stare at her and remember almost the same words spoken in the same voice, with the same intonation and the same whisper, when a whore once asked me, "Was that all right?" They are the same, these voices and these words, repeated under not-so-different circumstances; and there's the same questioning on the face, knowing that I'll answer yes as the whore knew that I'd answer yes. The parallel is too complete. Instinctively I pull away from her, preferring the whore.

(Excerpt 79 from Page 478)

She whispers, "I prayed for you this morning, my poor friend. I—I simply don't know. O God, I hope she's not really—pregnant." The word shimmers like a sudden chill through my body: Pregnant. Pregnant. Pregnant.

"She's little more than a whore, that one," says Madame Renee with sudden anger. "Just like her to refuse an operation. Well, I'll help you. I can think of something to drive her away."

"No, no!" and my voice is chokingly dry in my throat. "It can't be. She's a fine woman. It just can't be."

"I hope not," she says distractedly. "But why else would she come back here? We must find out."

"I can't believe it's that. Madame Vincent wouldn't have come back if it were. She'd have written."

"You're so foolish!" Madame Renee says intensely. "She's a whore, I tell you. She's responsible. I hope this teaches you a lesson."

(Excerpt 80 from Page 479)

My head turns and I fall into a chair. I feel a moment's exultation that my flesh is in the flesh of another's belly—but it's drowned in her age and in threatened disgrace.

(Excerpt 81 from Page 480 and 482)

Two young men, comrades, sit down at the next table. They order beer and talk—decent, sincere talk about the lamentable lack of girls in the Town. They are home for a vacation between semesters at school. I listen to them. They worry. They confide in each other as do two people with the same disease—the need of a girl to sleep with. One of them concludes by leaning back in his chair, and smiling sadly, and saying that he really doesn't know what he'll do if something doesn't turn up soon.

"She's a fine woman, you know. I hope the bitches will leave her in peace this time."

(Excerpt 82 from Page 485)

Pursing her lips she makes another laughing sound. Intimate, secret. Bends down to look at me more closely, casually putting a heavy hand on my stomach. "Now I know you're drunk, my friend," she chides. "But don't worry, no one else will ever know." Her hand pats my stomach, feels its outline like you feel a tomato to see if it's ripe. Pressing, releasing, heavy. Going lower.

"Sure I can't get you anything?"

"Nothing," I tell her. Hand on my belly. Hand feeling. Grinning hand and headache lost in pulsing.

Her face bends closer to mine, next to mine. I can smell her breathing and feel it. Skin, pores of skin. And thin gray hair floating in the air near my eye, catching highlights from the lamp. Her face shades mine. Warmth from her. My eyes lower, see the creases of her nose, fine particles of face powder. Hand on my belly and belly moving beneath her answering caress. She makes an intimate sound—small gust of warm air on my cheek. A hair, one fine thin gray hair floating there near my eye. Body in white dress somewhere there above me, near me. And legs, mortal thighs, wide thighs hidden but there somewhere. Face nearer mine. Belly moving under her grasping hand. Heavy hand. My arms go up clumsy, pulling

at her body there somewhere, feeling for it. Without opening, lips move against face pores. Spot on the ceiling above her. Eyes turn back to floating hair caught in lamplight. Hands feeling backs of legs. Feeling detached deepness of skin and fats that move. Fingers sinking in, moving up. Two frozen bodies together, waiting for hands to move up to thighs and hips. Hands moving, eyes closed. Softness of flesh changes to rough hard corset staves under white dress. Two frozen bodies. Hesitation of feeling. Again the fumblings. Hinted cringing as mouth opens to taste face, and softness of lips finds fine wrinkles of cheek. Hinted cringing as momentum builds. Her hands moving down on my belly and my hands moving up to feel hardness of covered breasts. Momentum, and her hands touch lowest belly beneath covers. Touch, feel a moment—and it flashes. Light flashes in my eyes as her hands are jerked away, as fine floating hair disappears. As body in white dress becomes motion of brutal tearing-away, as heavy hand slaps hard against my face, and slaps again. Turning of face with the slap. Confusion of spot on the ceiling now that her face is gone. Confused blinking to see the room clearly. She stands there high. Red swollen face. Accusing immobility. I rub my cheek and mouth where the hand struck. And I look at her there. I think of the stiff corset, the hard-packed breasts. I look at her outrage and laugh, and laughter grows uncontrollable. She turns to go, her fine gray hair being arranged with heavy, trembling hands back into a knot of convention atop her head. My voice

(Excerpt 83 from Page 487)

brakes her steps to a moment's pause. "So you're like that?" it taunts. "Lead a man on—"

Madame Renee's slap has disorganized my nerves, and her old woman's caress of my belly has filled me with loathing—and with a desire to consummate my excitement in a young girl. Thoughts of Christianne, of the way she moves,

of how she would be. I walk about my room. Thoughts become obsession, thoughts of all the women who have insinuated themselves into my life here—Madame Renee, Madame Vincent, Mademoiselle Marthe—and the dreams of Christianne which fight the dreams of an obscurely lighted chapel and of an unknown girl whom I could know in marriage.

(Excerpt 84 from Page 489)

The old woman leans her driveling wine-red lips near my ear. "And she's a fiery little bitch. From my side of the family. We got good blood on my side of the family. You look pale tonight—why don't you dance with her? She'll make your stove warm proper." She leans back cackling, nudging me in the ribs. I say nothing, and she cups her hands around her mouth and shouts,

"Hey, Christianne! Come over here!"

(Excerpt 85 from Page 490)

We dance farther off into the dark. And we move together, fitting close at belly and thigh-straining, torturing animal movements. The saxophone rises in a crescendo that echoes through the dark narrow tunnel of the street. I bend my face down and my lips become wet against her shoulder. She throws back her head, laughing, and we stop dancing. She is full of devil odors and laughter and it's an easy thing. Her hair falls to the back, away from her face. My lips kiss her under the chin and down the long throat, feeling the smoothness of young flesh. They kiss still lower, into the cut of her dress between her breasts, feeling the crease of her large breasts. Smells from under the dress: smells of sweat and lively odors of exercise. Smells of rutting youngness—rich, animal, intoxicating—tearing me with tremblings. I fondle and fumble and kiss, inhaling risings from her dress. She reaches down, laughing, puts her hand under my chin and lifts my face to hers.

We begin dancing again. Slowness of dance, violent shaking and violent music. Other odors return, odors of the beginnings of greenery from the pastures about us—waking smells of dampness in the warming earth. We dance a torment of closeness, pressed against a flimsiness of clothing. The sky hangs low, forbidding, and she heats in my arms. She smiles, looking up into my drawn face, and her smile is smells, too—smells of garlic and wine and food digesting below, of white teeth and wetness of inner mouth. I bend down, inhaling these odors, and all about is the burgeoning heaviness of first greens, of earth coming alive after its long sleep. Damp night-odors of earth's rumblings. Thigh straining against thigh. We dance with both arms clasped about each other, arms going lower and lower, pressing lower parts together. The music stops again. Laughing shouts float down the street to us. We don't even think of going back. We continue dancing. And in the dancing, lips find lips, open mouth finds open mouth and inside of mouth, as mouth shakes against mouth laughing and caressing till it engulfs us with its eye-closed dizziness and nose feels warm exhalation from the nose beneath. We stand still. Lips grow rigid. Laughing stops as the hardness of our kiss creates a vacuum of the senses.

A first drop of rain, followed by other scattered drops. A shout of despair from the other dancers. We separate lips and to tongues with a noisy wetness. I walk her into the nearest doorway. The rain is light. We stand side by side without speaking until she mutters, "It's blowing on my—I'm getting wet."

"So am I," I laugh. "Here, let me stand in front of you." Rain falls lightly, wetting the cobblestones. It's a fine mist fogging the streets, catching the reds and greens and oranges of the dance lights. I stand in front of her, against her, protecting her from the rain. Our arms are around each other, and her face is cool with the mist. Noises of water dripping from the eaves about us, and sounds of the

River, fill a music-emptied Valley with a flood of moving sound. I stand close to her, clasping her, bending to kiss her eyes, and the rain blows on my back, on my neck and ears. It drips from the roof above, dripping onto my back, wetting my coat and pants. I ignore the coldness of the rain and lean hard against her, pressing her to the locked door behind which someone sleeps never suspecting. Time and rain and wetness fade. Lips drink of lips. My hands find buttons and undo them, feeling inside. My hands fondle her lightly, a caress to the nakedness of her back and belly and breasts. She trembles violently as blood pounds into the kiss of our joined mouths, as intimacy becomes complete and movements attune themselves to the night and the deserted wet street. I reach up to remove the dress from her shoulders, but her hand against my hand forbids, asks mine to wait.

"Here comes a car," she whispers against my ear. "Don't let them see me."

I stand against her to hide her from the street. The car moves past in a humming of tires on wet pavement, and pulls to a stop. Christianne trembles from the interruption, and rain falls more rapidly. I feel my way into her dress again, but she peers out and whispers, "Why, it's stopped at your house."

(Excerpt 86 from Page 492)

"It has?" I turn and look. The taillights glisten redly through the falling rain. And coming from the dark, illuminated in the glare of the headlights, a woman walks rapidly—a glimpse is all, as she gets into the car.

Christianne stares and mutters, "Why, isn't that your lady from Paris?"

"Yes. This may be important. Wait for me here, won't you? I must see her."

"Ah, no—you leave me for her!"

"No, no," I tell her, kissing her hurriedly, "I leave you

for no one. But I must see her."

The exhaust from the car smokes its acceleration and I leave Christianne unbuttoned, dashing and sliding over the slippery walk, calling for the car to wait.

(Excerpt 87 from Page 493)

"Where'd you go, child? Wouldn't my Christianne be nice to you? I'll tell her a thing or two!" She stands close to me, her face serious, concerned.

"It was my fault, old Mother, not hers. She was fine. Where is she now?

"Just danced off down the street with young Edouard, the sculptor's son. Did she leave you? I'll go get the young slut."

"No, let her go, I'm too tired. But will she be all right, do you think? Will he finish what I started?"

The old hag stares at me, shaking her head. "You look bad, M'sieu. Couldn't you make it go? Should be plenty able from what I've seen. I'm surprised, but I know how it won't go sometimes when you want it to. Try eating boiled celery, they say that helps."

I pat her arm. "It's nothing like that, old Mother. We were interrupted. Something has happened. It's nothing like that."

"Damn! I'm glad to know it. Don't you want me to go for her?"

(Excerpt 88 from Page 511)

She stares up at me. "Why didn't you tell me you were at the dance last night? Madame Marceaux said you danced with Christianne with a servant girl!"

I laugh. "Madame Marceaux's a bitter old woman: she needs to be violated by an enormous man. Sure, I danced with Christianne. It was a public dance. And if you want to know the rest, Mother Confessor, I played with her too."

"Oh, no," she moans.

"Don't act so surprised. Both you and Madame Marceaux think it went further than that—and it would have, only we were interrupted. It rained on us."

"Ha, that's good. So your world can be ruined by the indiscretion of the buttons on my pants.

(Excerpt 89 from Page 514)

"Drunk enough," he grins, "to . . . uh . . . go after Christianne, from what I hear."

"You don't have to be drunk," I mutter, "to do that. Been wanting her a long time."

He squints at me through the smoke of his cigarette, and asks seriously, "How was she, M'sieu? I've always wondered about that one."

"Lord!" I groan, shaking my head appreciatively. "A little animal. I nearly went crazy."

"That good, eh?"

"You can't imagine—she's made for it." His usual cynical grin is replaced, momentarily, by an expression of benevolent warmth. "I'm glad. Now you'll have her regularly." "I doubt it. You knew I didn't finish. I only paved the way for Edouard."

"No!" He stares at me. "I knew she was with Edouard too, but I just supposed—"

"I was called away before finishing the job. When I went back she was off in the dark somewhere with him."

"Anyone who'd just walk off and leave something like that . . ." He shakes his head unbelievingly.

"You're right. But I was worried sick about Madame Vincent that night. I was afraid she was pregnant, you know—but I found out she's not."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that, M'sieu. Glad for you," he adds absently, still shaking his head. "You just walked away from Christianne? Left her there?"

"Unbuttoned," I say gravely. I hand him my cigarette to put out. "You think my fooling around with her did

me much harm with the gossips?"

"No," he snorts, "probably helped. From what I hear, some of them were beginning to wonder if M'sieu weren't maybe hung like a dove."

"If I wasn't what? You mean . . . Why, they should've known from Madame Vincent it wasn't that."

"Still, it's hard to say. They don't think it's natural for a young man to live like this—in a cage, so to speak, cooped up with an old woman. Has she got to you yet?—not that it's any of my business."

"Not yet, but she—" I hesitate, then decide to say nothing more.

(Excerpt 90 from Page 518)

"No damn it," I admit. "Michel wrote me too. All right, so he's an idiot and so he's getting married. Good riddance!" She lifts her eyes to the ceiling. "O God! God damn him; God damn his soul for doing this to me! I'll stop it! He can't do it."

(Excerpt 91 from Page 519)

"God deliver me!" I laugh brutally. "Virginity in a woman is a messy business. Be thankful someone else has already bled her."

(Excerpt 92 from Page 529)

I crumple the paper and throw it in the direction of the stove. The bitch! The damned peeping bitch! But—perhaps I'm wrong.

(Excerpt 93 from Page 530)

Perhaps I kicked the covers off. The room was warm when I woke up. I could have kicked them off.

I think of the prayers I muttered yesterday. They're destroyed today—destroyed as though they'd never been—by the memory of an old woman cradling my feet in her

belly, perhaps pulling back covers to gaze at my sleeping nakedness . . .

(Excerpt 94 from Page 533)

"Nothing. You know I'm happy to have your company, but I've got to keep my privacy. You understand. What if somebody had walked in here this morning and found us together—with me naked? . . ."

"What?" she asks expressionlessly.

"Well, how would it look? What would you think if—?"

"Why, you nasty-mouthed—" Her voice is loud and thick.

"It's the truth, isn't it?" I blurt out. "At least I don't go around peeking at naked old women. I don't—"

A hopeless broken laugh interrupts me. She raises her head, her eyes question insultingly. "You don't?"

"Hell, no!"

"Of course not," she says sweetly, "you're an angel. You prefer tickling their stomachs with your toes, don't you?"

"Well, I'll be damned!" I clamp my teeth together, thoughts tumbling in confusion. I stare at her. "I think you owe me an apology, Madame. I can't—Ah, the hell with it." I let the words die in a tired, dull voice.

She snorts, "I don't apologize to kids," looking away, shrugging her shoulders.

(Excerpt 95 from Page 534)

She smiles again, uncertainly, and draws back a step. Angrily I reach for the doorknob to shut her out, but she won't move and the door strikes her left shoulder. As I walk away she steps back into the room; she is holding a handful of her left breast, the breast large and cupped in her hand as a lover might hold it.

"You closed the door on my breast," she whines. "You hurt my breast."

The sight of her standing there, grimacing from the imagined pain in her breast, pressing it, squeezing it, pulling

down her bodice as though to show me, is more than I can bear. I burst into laughter. "Ah, what a brute I am!" (The insult causes her face to glow with sudden dignity.) "The door didn't touch your breast and you know it. Now, if you want to expose yourself, do it—but for God's sake stop playing with that thing and leave me alone."

(Excerpt 96 from Page 538)

Her craving for intimacy. The touches. Her breast. Thoughts wander into speculation. I place a bare patch of flesh at her disposal and it buys—what? Michel's happiness? I become a whore, then. No, it's not possible . . . but yet, curiously, it's like the whore's "Pssst!"

She bites her lip pensively, reddening, and closing her eyes she nods that it is—"A little." Her hand begins fondling the breast again, as pleasure bloats her face.

"Hell!" escapes me and I turn away from the sight of her, sick. Catching myself, I'm about to apologize when she lifts herself out of her chair and comes quickly to my side.

"No," she soothes, "you mustn't blame yourself so." Her hand is heavy on my shoulder. "If I'd known you were going to be so upset about it I'd never have mentioned it." She gives me a gentle little shove and laughs warmly. Reaching down, she takes my hand in hers. "Isn't there a little knot—there?"

(Excerpt 97 from Page 539)

A shudder of repulsion as she guides my hand into probing softness. "Believe there is," I mumble, struggling against the desire to tear my hand away.

"Listen, stop worrying," she murmurs close to my ear. "It's probably nothing serious."

Her stomach beside me. I'm aware of it as something naked and cavernous. Sensations of a whore. A coin for a caress, submitting to the caress, killing the desire to draw

away until the desire flames out and there's only the belly dragging against you. A cheap coin—the price of legitimizing Michel's venereal fevers—cheap. It buys my whorish slaverings and come-ons, my harlot sincerity and warmth.

"Don't feel so bad about it," she goes on, her face brushing against mine. "It doesn't hurt so much now."

I submit, not moving, closing my eyes and seeing her, seeing her swollen into a gigantic serpentine voluptuousness. A vision of strong legs, deep navels, bursting milk-white breasts—insatiable, grasping, choking triangles of pubick grayness before my eyes. Begging to be possessed, wavering slow undulation deep within me, suffocating me. Lost. Irritation of being lost. Touching the table hardness with my hands, fighting the vision. Concentrating against it and carrying it forward, letting it escape into the fog of dreams and desires. Hunger mixing with the deep-etched circular lines inside a woman's navel. I am walking slowly in the navel, on the tiny trails that spiral inside the canyon, looking up, sight-seeing, walking and looking about. Hunger for the taste of maggot-ridden carrion. Veiled redness, glistening. Tremulous building into—

(Excerpt 98 from Page 564)

"I'm so sorry," she says in a cracked voice. "I know you. You've needed me and I've failed you. That's what makes you so nervous." Her hand touches the back of my neck, fondles around to my cheek. "Remember the night you got drunk? You wanted me then." A sob breaks her voice. "If—if you'd just be nice to me . . ."

I feel her breath against my face. I sit stunned as her cheek brushes against mine. Unconsciously I arch my head away, but the tingling juncture creates in me a suppressed excitement as hinted animal tangents converge into focused desire. The body knows the possibilities and begins to savor them far in advance of consent. I sit motionless,

remembering feelings—the catching of the breath, the flooding of warmth when a whore hisses, when a street girl glances, when body becomes aware of body and stirs its own compulsions. No. I recoil, but muscles and nerves become hypnotized. A faint odor of face powder, musky, stirs my intestines with simultaneous loathing and desire. The aunting possibility—the offer of her body to my body, of her nerves to my nerves in brute slakings of inverse pleasure—is irresistibly compelling. I feel her hand prowling across my chest, warm and full. A suffocated exhalation rasps loudly from her as her fingers grasp hungrily at my chest and, with a circular motion, caress a wide . . . All feelings, all emotions center in the soft warmth of possibilities contained in her body beside me in suspense while her strong fingers unbuckle my belt and crawl stealthily searching . . . until clothing is no longer a wall and flesh touches living flesh to stimulate engulfing desire. A battery of sensuality is exploded into my belly. Her lips against my face. Through slitted eyes I look downward.

(Excerpt 99 from Page 565)

The black wool sleeve, disappearing beneath cloth, weaves gently. I hold my breath painfully. For a drunken moment my sight is caught by the glistening stain of coagulated sugar where the preserves were dropped on her sleeve. Her lips trail a pattern of sensation across my cheek and I turn to meet them closing my eyes. A whimpering sob escapes her as our mouths join and move liquidly, hungrily against each other. Shock as her mouth exudes its warmth onto mine. I struggle to my feet, my legs shaking so that I can scarcely support my weight. I gasp as she withdraws her hand. Her arms snake their way beneath my armpits. We stand pressed together, hands and mouths and groins searching living tumescence.

But passion falters with a caught breath. A thought bolts through my consciousness—a faint protesting plea

that warns me of the moment, begs me to break away. Formless plea, vague and meaningless. She rubs against me. She is like a bitch in heat dragging me into her, and tensions build hopelessly against the plea. The plea is a fleck, an irritation flecking mucous union, as groins and bellies become united in overwhelming thirst. Her arms tentacle-like, tighten around me and we float in feverish embrace as the plea sends words tracing themselves in dreamy sequence, like a curl of smoke, through a faraway consciousness. Mary conceived without . . . I lean back against the table, rejecting the flecked words, and pull her full against me, my hands beneath her buttocks grasping the whale softness . . . sin, pray for . . . Vision alternates with blindness. Suddenly I see a throbbing heartbeat in the hollow of her scarlet throat, then blackness as hands seek intimacy and lips suck lips in hyena laughter. She arches forward, maneuvering until her legs frame my thighs . . . pray for us who have . . . The grit, the irritating grit of pleas, like sand against tender inner flesh. The plea begging me, pumping words against the diaphragm of my craving. Now or never, now or never. Destruction. I feel her hands grasp my head and lower it inexorably to her throat. I taste the flesh and feel her swallowing muscles beneath my lips. Mary, conceived without sin, pray . . . Her belly twists with pleasure in a gigantic serpentine

(Excerpt 100 from Page 566)

voluptuousness, tossing me into a full dream of carnality. But somewhere in the back of my mind, clogged with screaming desire for her, the resisting plea flickers, hesitates, blinks out, pulsates to the fore as bloods pound out visions of strong legs, of distorted buttocks, of insatiable, slavering vaginas. Lost. I lift her higher over me as her hands force my head downward into the opening of her dress. The hard edge of the table bites into my haunches . . . without sin . . . The two images—nakedness full of rich

odors struggling against the dim image of words, blotted and blinded. All things—the past, the hopes—combine into ambivalence attracting, opposing, striving as all futures and all times become the moment. My hand finds her most intimate warmth and burns with pleasure. The will like an inflexible pole, the will tall and phallic—and something beyond me seeking to bend the will, to change its course for the first time, for the very first time in my life. Mary . . . inner sobbing . . . conceived without sin . . . forcing the words against all desire . . . pray for us who have recourse to thee. Bending the will, distorting the will —until the rack becomes insane and the soul bursts into weeping. Words die in suffocation as a slow undulation knots the entrails with her bitch cravings. I feel her knuckles hard against my chin as she opens her dress. With the other hand she pushes my mouth against the upward slant of her exposed breast, my lips clutching. Concentrating, concentrating, not letting it die . . . without sin, pray for us . . . like the faded print of an old newspaper, yellowed, mixed with the reek of my saliva on her breast as my mouth is guided hopelessly toward the goal, the detested goal, the nipple. Muscles in my neck resist. The dread of arriving at the prune nipple. Aged flesh, used, but fresh eternally in Great exhaustion from struggling against the faded print that now dominates my inner vision. Shaking my head against the lustful snare. Eyes glimpse blue veins beneath transparent white skin, saliva-streaked, saliva-stenched. Mary . . . pleading, begging as the nippled

(Excerpt 101 from Page 567)

goal draws near. Mary . . . and the hard warm shriveled bulb against the corner of my mouth. Fighting back the choking rise of vomit, as muscles tense rigid and all concentration divides between the dreaded goal and the words pulsating clearer. Mary, conceived without sin . . . And the faded print is suffused slowly with luminous black, and

the old newspaper, yellowed, becomes atmosphere shimmering behind words, destroying the other image as I feel the nipple bending to enter my mouth and my mouth rejecting it in a convulsive wrenching as the screeching howling rasping whiteness slithers away to sudden nothingness. I shove her away and stare open-eyed. The room swims wildly. I see her congested face, the exposed breast glistening. Without opening her eyes she flows toward me, arms outstretched. Slowly, dazedly, I lift my arm high in the air and bring my fist smashing down into her face. She crumples to the floor. Dimly I see tiles coming up to meet me as blood-mists float across my eyes. I catch myself against the table, weaving, trying to focus on the whispered Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us . . . And far in the distance, out of space, confusions and sicknesses gyrate around the one exultant nucleus; For the first time. For the very first time.

Madame Renee, wallowing on the floor, is wrenched with sobs. Slowly, I lower trembling hands to my belt, and stuffing in my shirt tail I buckle my pants. Reeling senses seek their level in the tear-mulched silence. In my legs there's no strength left to support me. I lower myself in the chair and let my head fall forward on the table, inundated with gratitude for the insistent phrase: For the very first time—abandoning myself to it—For the very first time. I am filled with the gentle, floating pain of unbearable relief.

A scuffing sound attracts my attention. I open my eyes and look downward. The table angle gives a triangular view of the floor. Absently I watch, seeing only her sturdy black shoes and the hem of her dress as she gets to her feet. I watch the shoes turn sideways, hesitate, then disappear beyond my range of vision.